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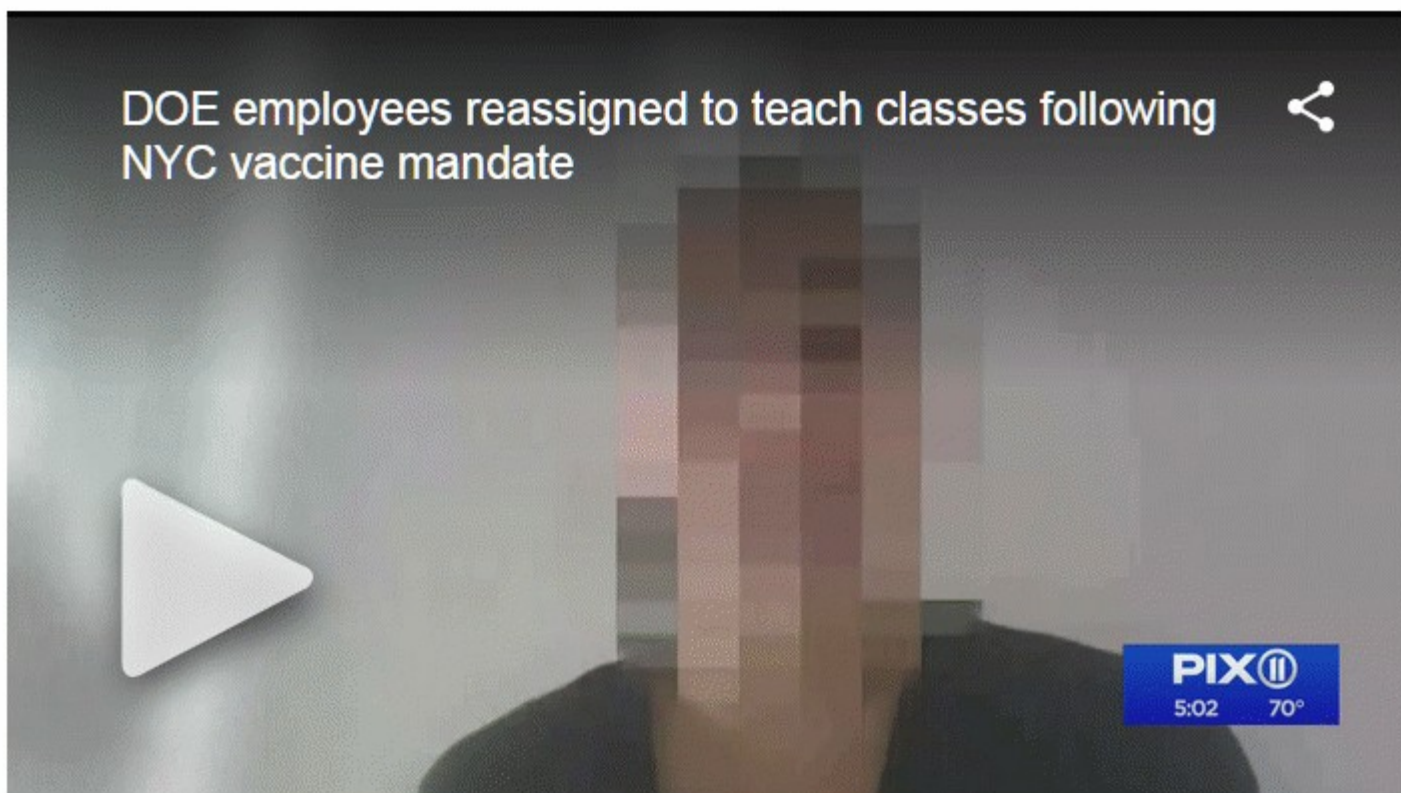


# NYC DOE employees reassigned over vaccine mandates say students, schools are shortchanged

[Local News](#)

by: [James Ford](#)

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NEW YORK — One aspect of the [vaccine mandate for New York City public schools](#) is shortchanging students, families, and Department of Education employees, according to hundreds inside the system. They are vaccinated, trained specialists who say that a DOE policy related to the mandate reassigned them to schools to teach and to do other classroom educational tasks, even though they're not classroom educators.

Instead, they're data analysts, social workers, guidance counselors, researchers and others who are connected to the DOE central office. They each usually rotate among a variety of schools, rather than be assigned to just one.

They say that since the vaccine mandate was put in place on Monday, they've either been mis-assigned, or they're being under-used at the schools to which they've been redeployed.

In any case, they say, they're highly trained in professions that are meant to benefit students in ways other than straight classroom instruction, and that students and schools aren't benefiting from their expertise at a

time when it's strongly needed.

One central office employee who said that she'd been unnecessarily reassigned spoke with PIX11 News, but asked that her identity not be revealed.

"We have been removed from schools that are in need of our mental health support, that are in need of our coaching, that have a legitimate reason for us to be there and support these kids and these teachers and leaders," she said in an interview, "[but] instead we are being [mis-]utilized or underutilized."

On that latter point, one reassigned central office professional posted on social media, "I've spent most of my day keeping this couch in the office warm. How is this helping the students of NYC Schools?"

Another person posted about a "friend, who is not licensed for special education, and has never worked with kids older than age 4, [who] was redeployed as a Grade 5 special ed teacher."

"That's what we're upset about," the anonymous central office employee said in an interview, "because we want to go back to our jobs, and do our work."

"That's what we're passionate for," she said. "That's what we want to do."

David Bloomfield, an education policy analyst at the CUNY Graduate Center and Brooklyn College, said that the situation may take some time to resolve, and that that doesn't bode well for anyone involved.

"This will likely go on for a while," Bloomfield said, "until the mayor decides that [unvaccinated employees] who aren't coming back need to be replaced by qualified individuals."

"But in the meanwhile," he continued, "children are losing important weeks and months of continuity in their instruction and in their relationships with their teachers and other staff."

As for a way to improve the current situation, Bloomfield said that it won't be very easy.

It will require, he said, "figuring out who's available as a long-term substitute qualified for the job that they're going into."

That has to be done with every vacant position, Bloomfield said. "And that's the only way to resolve it," he added.

Of the DOE's 148,000 employees, just under 7,000 remain unvaccinated, according to DOE figures.

Closing that gap, which includes about 3,000 teachers, may take quite a while.

The reassigned central office employees said that their union, the United Federation of Teachers, had said that the reassignments may end within two weeks or so, and that they may be assigned back to their normal duties before November begins. The reassigned employees are skeptical.

PIX11 News asked Mayor Bill de Blasio to address their doubts.

"No, it's not long-term," he said, at his daily news conference on Wednesday morning.

"It depends on every individual case," he continued. "Ultimately, obviously every student's going to have an appropriate teacher. Schools sometimes make very temporary moves if they have a particular need they have to cover."

"We have plenty of substitute teachers," said the mayor, "but more importantly, the teachers that were there to begin with, 96% as of this moment, [96% of all teachers got vaccinated](#)."

The reassigned central office employees weren't satisfied with the mayor's assurances. They said that they'll

only believe that they'll be back in their regular jobs once they're actually there.

"I think all of us are just really disheartened," the anonymous reassigned employee said.

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